



Lauren Michalson
Kansas SAFETY STAR 2007-2008

Lauren Michalson
Age 16
Overland Park, Kan.
Parents: Cheryl & Jeff Michalson

In July of 2005 Lauren and her family were vacationing in Crested Butte, Colorado. Like so many 12-year old boys, her brother, Tommy was a huge skateboarding fan. So it was no surprise that he spent much of his vacation time at a nearby skate park. Following family rules, Tommy always wore his helmet when he rode at the skate park.

About a week into their vacation, the family was walking down a recreation path. Their plan was to drop Tommy off at the skate park, while the rest of the family did some shopping. Part way along, they realized that Tommy forgot to bring his helmet. He and Lauren were going to head back to pick it up when Tommy decided he would skip the skate park that day.

Tommy then began to skateboard down the path, stopping periodically to wait for the family to catch up. At one point, Tommy skated down a hill, out of sight from the rest of the family. A short time later, the family noticed a sheriff's car and heard the siren of an approaching ambulance. They began to worry and started running in Tommy's direction.

They found him on the ground, unconscious and bleeding from his nose. He was still breathing when the paramedics arrived. They were LifeFlighted to the hospital. The Michalsons were told that Tommy had fractured the base of his skull, causing a severe brain injury. Later that night, despite the doctors' best efforts, Tommy passed away.

Lauren has suffered a lifetime loss, but she hopes that sharing Tommy's story will help reinforce the importance of always wearing a helmet when on any type of wheels – skateboards, bicycles, scooters and in-line skates. Tommy had no internal injuries or broken bones – just a fractured skull. If he had been wearing a helmet that fateful morning, he might not have suffered a fatal injury.

Lauren has spoken to lawmakers, kids and parents in both Washington D.C. and Kansas. She distributes stickers that remind kids to "Protect Your Head So You Can RAFT" (Ride Again For Tommy). As the Safe Kids Kansas "Safety Star," she will appear at safety events and continue to share her experience.